United Nations S/2012/124

Security Council

Distr.: General
28 February 2012

Original: English

Eighteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006)

I. Introduction

1. The present report provides a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006) since the last report of the Secretary-General (S/2011/715) was issued on 14 November 2011.

2. Over the past four months, the parties have continued to maintain their commitment to resolution 1701 (2006). The cessation of hostilities has continued to hold, and the situation in the area of operations of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) has remained generally stable. However, a number of serious incidents occurred during this period, pointing to the continued fragility of the situation and its potential for deterioration.

3. On 9 December, UNIFIL suffered the third terrorist attack against it in 2011, and the first in its area of operations since June 2007. A UNIFIL vehicle was hit by an explosion caused by a roadside bomb on the outskirts of the city of Tyre. Five peacekeepers serving with the French contingent and two Lebanese civilian passers-by were injured.

4. The announcement of Prime Minister Najib Mikati on 30 November that he had transferred Lebanon's share of the budget of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon for 2011 ended a period of prolonged political uncertainty. I welcomed this step and looked forward to the continued cooperation of the Government of Lebanon with the Special Tribunal for Lebanon in accordance with its international obligations.

5. The deepening crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic has continued to affect Lebanon, increasing political polarization and concern that the unrest in the Syrian Arab Republic could have negative ramifications for the stability of Lebanon. Syrian security forces have continued to carry out operations along the Syrian-Lebanese border, part of which has been mined in recent months. In a number of instances, shooting at or across the border has led to the death or injury of civilians on Lebanese soil. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the High Relief Commission have currently registered more than 6,000 displaced Syrians.

6. On 10 February 2012, fighting broke out in the city of Tripoli against the background of demonstrations related to the situation in the Syrian Arab Republic. In exchanges of fire, three people were killed and more than 20 injured, including

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members of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Following the intervention of the Lebanese Armed Forces and of local Members of Parliament, security and other officials, order was restored on 11 February.

7. From 13 to 15 January 2012, I visited Lebanon and held talks with President Sleiman, Prime Minister Mikati and Speaker Berri, as well as a number of representatives of Lebanese parties. I also paid a visit to UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura. In all my discussions with Lebanese interlocutors, I stressed that I expected Lebanon to meet its international obligations, including those under resolution 1701 (2006).

8. I visited Israel on 1 and 2 February and met with President Peres, Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defence Minister Barak and Foreign Minister Lieberman. In my meetings, I emphasized the importance of Israel meeting its obligations under resolution 1701 (2006).

9. On 28 January, UNIFIL Force Commander Major General Alberto Asarta Cuevas transferred his authority to the incoming UNIFIL Force Commander Major General Paolo Serra. On 4 February, the new Special Coordinator for Lebanon, Derek Plumbly, arrived in Beirut and assumed his functions.

II. Implementation of resolution 1701 (2006)

A. Situation in the UNIFIL area of operations

10. There were several incidents during the reporting period. The most serious was an explosion that injured five UNIFIL peacekeepers outside the city of Tyre on 9 December. The incident is described in detail in paragraph 57 below.

11. On 29 November, two rockets were fired across the Blue Line from the general area of Rumaysh (Sector West) inside the UNIFIL area of operations, from a location about 5 km north of the Blue Line. One of the rockets damaged a poultry farm in the vicinity of Netua, some 500 m south of the Blue Line. The second rocket landed on a hill near Kefar Veradim, some 10 km south of the Blue Line. The Israel Defense Forces responded by firing four artillery shells across the Blue Line into Lebanon, directed towards the rocket-launching site. No casualties resulted from the incident.

12. On 11 December, one rocket was fired in the direction of Israel from the general area of Qaysiyah valley, between Khirbat Silim and Jumaymah (Sector West) in the UNIFIL area of operations, at a distance of approximately 10 km from the Blue Line. The rocket struck a private home in the Lebanese village of Houla (Sector East), some 2 km from the Blue Line, seriously injuring a woman inside the house.

13. UNIFIL, in cooperation with the parties, immediately initiated investigations into both rocket attacks to determine the facts and circumstances. These investigations are ongoing. In addition, following each incident, the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL took immediate steps to intensify patrolling activities in the area of operations, particularly in areas from where rockets could be launched. In response to these and other security incidents, additional operational measures

were put in place. The relevant Lebanese authorities also launched their own investigations to identify and apprehend the perpetrators.

14. On 19 December 2011, a Lebanese farmer discovered four rockets buried in the ground in his olive orchard in the area of Wadi Khancha (Sector East). The Lebanese Armed Forces removed the rockets and informed UNIFIL that they would be destroyed. UNIFIL, in coordination with the Lebanese Armed Forces, is investigating this discovery.

15. The trial of two individuals accused of having fired a rocket from the village of Houla (Sector West) into Israel in October 2009 (see S/2011/715, para. 14), was held on 25 November. Both accused were convicted and sentenced to three years in prison with hard labour.

16. In addition, three explosions occurred in Tyre. In the early morning hours of 16 November, two separate explosions targeted a hotel bar and a liquor store. There were no injuries, but two United Nations vehicles, which had been parked close to one of the locations, were damaged. In the early morning of 28 December, another explosion occurred at a restaurant in Tyre, again causing some material damage but no injuries. The Lebanese authorities continue their investigations of the explosions.

17. Another explosion occurred on 2 December in a valley close to the village of Srifa (Sector West) caused by explosive charges contained in devices buried underground. Lebanon claims that the devices and the charges were part of an Israel Defense Forces communications system. There were no reports of casualties.

18. The Israel Defense Forces continued its occupation of the northern part of Ghajar village and an adjacent area of land north of the Blue Line, in violation of resolution 1701 (2006). Further to the submission of the UNIFIL proposal for security arrangements to both parties on 25 June, the Israel Defense Forces informed UNIFIL that the arrangements would require the approval of the Government of Israel. The response from Israel on the security arrangements is still pending. The Lebanese Armed Forces conveyed their approval on 19 July 2011.

19. The Israel Defense Forces continued to make almost daily intrusions into Lebanese airspace, mainly by unmanned aerial vehicles but also by fighter jets. These overflights are violations of resolution 1701 (2006), as well as of Lebanese sovereignty. UNIFIL has continued to protest all air violations, calling on the Israeli authorities to cease them immediately. The Government of Lebanon also protested the violations, while the Government of Israel continued to maintain that the overflights are a necessary security measure.

20. There were several ground violations of the Blue Line, mostly inadvertent, by Lebanese shepherds tending livestock in the Shab'a Farms and Kafr Shouba areas, and by farmers harvesting olives in their fields near Blida. These violations decreased significantly with the onset of winter. On one occasion, individuals were observed crossing the Blue Line and photographing the area.

21. Despite these violations, the reporting period witnessed an improvement in the security situation along the Blue Line and a decrease in the number of incidents in the sensitive area of Kafr Kila. There were no incidents of weapons aiming between Israeli and Lebanese soldiers and, while there were a few incidents involving civilians throwing stones at the Israeli technical fence, actions taken by both

Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces personnel ensured that they were contained.

22. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces built on their close cooperation, with the aim of enhancing their coordinated activities. The Lebanese Armed Forces maintained their deployment of three brigades and two battalions. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued their daily operational activities, including, on average, at least 38 coordinated activities per day, in addition to operating seven co-located checkpoints along the Litani River. During periods requiring heightened security in the area of operations, the Lebanese Armed Forces deployed additional troops to carry out an increased number of operational activities, jointly with UNIFIL, as well as on its own. Following the two rocket launches from the UNIFIL area of operations, UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces increased their counter-rocket launching operations in the areas near the Blue Line. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces also continued to carry out joint capability exercises and training activities on land and at sea, including a joint artillery exercise, while other activities focused on the capabilities of the two Forces to deal with improvised explosive devices, practising search and rescue operations at sea, communication and information systems, and security awareness procedures.

23. UNIFIL generally enjoyed freedom of movement to carry out its mandated tasks throughout its area of operations, carrying out more than 10,000 patrols each month. On two occasions, the movement of UNIFIL was restricted. On 9 December, a UNIFIL team was stopped by a group of approximately 15 Lebanese civilians in the vicinity of Ramyah (Sector West), who accused the UNIFIL personnel of having taken photographs and snatched a handheld radio and a camera. A Lebanese Armed Forces patrol arrived at the scene and calmed down the situation. The Lebanese Armed Forces returned the items to UNIFIL the following day. On 27 December, a UNIFIL vehicle was slightly damaged in the vicinity of Bourj al Malouke (Sector East) when Lebanese civilians in two cars restricted the movement of UNIFIL, alleging that an earlier UNIFIL patrol had taken their photographs. As the UNIFIL vehicle manoeuvred to leave the spot, one of the civilian cars rammed the UNIFIL vehicle. On 26 January, during an operational activity in the general area of Ayta ash-Sha'b (Sector West) near the Blue Line, a Lebanese civilian snatched a camera from a UNIFIL soldier. The camera was subsequently returned. UNIFIL strongly protested the incidents to the Lebanese Armed Forces, and called on the Lebanese authorities to take action against individuals involved in these incidents. The authorities assured UNIFIL that they take these incidents seriously, and pledged to provide UNIFIL with the results of their investigations.

24. Despite the incidents reported above, the attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL remained generally positive during the reporting period. Civil Affairs and Civil-Military Coordination Units at headquarters and sector-level addressed and ensured a timely response to concerns raised by local authorities related to UNIFIL operational activities, such as damage caused by heavy vehicles to roads in the area of operations. The Civil Affairs Office and Civil-Military Coordination teams continued regular liaison and outreach activities, including through facilitation of environmental and health awareness campaigns and of cultural activities in public schools and with local youth and women groups. Quick-impact projects continue to be implemented through funding provided by troop-contributing countries, as well as the UNIFIL budget.

25. During the reporting period, UNIFIL frequently encountered individuals carrying hunting weapons inside the area of operations, in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006). The Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL continued to work together to curb all hunting activities by armed individuals. In most instances, the individuals left the area quickly upon seeing UNIFIL or the Lebanese Armed Forces arrive. On two occasions, a Lebanese Armed Forces patrol detained one hunter, and on three other occasions confiscated hunting weapons and ammunition.

26. UNIFIL continued to provide assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps to establish an area free of armed personnel, assets and weapons between the Blue Line and the Litani River, other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL. This remains a long-term objective. The incidents over the reporting period, detailed above, demonstrated that weapons and hostile armed elements ready to use them were present within the area of operations. UNIFIL activities did not lead to the discovery of any new arms caches, military materiel or infrastructure during the reporting period. The Force did not find evidence that previously discovered sites had been reactivated. Armed persons and weapons also remain present inside Palestinian refugee camps in the UNIFIL area of operations.

27. The Government of Israel continued to allege that Hizbullah had been building up its military positions and units inside populated areas in southern Lebanon and that unauthorized weapons were being transferred into Lebanon, including into the UNIFIL area of operations. In case specific information is received regarding the illegal presence of armed personnel or weapons in its area of operations, UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, remains determined to act with all means available within its mandate and to the full extent provided for in its rules of engagement, as described in my previous reports. To date, UNIFIL has neither been provided with, nor found, evidence of the unauthorized transfer of arms into its area of operations.

28. The Mission was not able to determine whether the rockets and explosives materials used in the attacks and incidents described above were already present in its area of operations or whether they were brought in from outside. The Lebanese Armed Forces Command continued to state that it would act immediately to put a stop to any illegal activity in contravention of resolution 1701 (2006) and relevant Government decisions.

29. The UNIFIL maritime task force continued to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations and training of Lebanese naval forces. Since my last report, Lebanese navy and customs officials inspected 293 vessels identified as potentially of interest, and cleared them all. During the reporting period, and in response to requests by Lebanese naval authorities, the UNIFIL Maritime Task Force intensified its surveillance activities in certain parts of the area of maritime operations to prevent suspected smuggling activities. UNIFIL and the Lebanese naval forces conducted 16 workshops and 106 at-sea training phases during the reporting period.

30. Incidents along the line of buoys continued to occur, with the Israel Defense Forces dropping depth charges or firing flares and warning shots along the buoy line. There was, however, a significant decrease in such incidents in the course of 2011 as compared to 2010. UNIFIL has no mandate to monitor the line of buoys, which the Government of Israel installed unilaterally and which the Government of Lebanon does not recognize. At the request of the parties, UNIFIL is engaged in

exploratory bilateral discussions with both sides on maritime security issues, and the parties agreed to discuss these issues through the tripartite mechanism, with the possible inclusion of naval experts. UNIFIL remains ready to assist the parties regarding maritime security issues, in accordance with its mandate under resolution 1701 (2006).

B. Security and liaison arrangements

31. UNIFIL continued to carry out its liaison and coordination with both parties, as set out in my previous reports. Daily interaction and liaison activities between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continued at its established high and effective level. UNIFIL also has maintained effective liaison and coordination with the Israel Defense Forces. There has been no progress in establishing a UNIFIL office in Tel Aviv.

32. Monthly tripartite meetings, chaired by the UNIFIL Head of Mission and Force Commander and attended by senior Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces representatives, continued to provide strategic level liaison and coordination, remained the key mechanism to address security and military operational issues related to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006), and played an important confidence-building role.

33. The tripartite forum regularly discussed security and military operational issues, including ensuring full respect for the integrity of the Blue Line in its entirety, and seeking solutions to ease localized tensions and prevent incidents along the Line. In this regard, UNIFIL continued to implement specific operational procedures in the Kafr Kila and El Adeisse areas following the termination of a three-month pilot project, encouraged the parties to continue to respect the procedures, and sought further tangible mitigation measures. Both parties agreed to enhance security measures along the Blue Line in the Kafr Kila area, with a view to easing tensions and preventing incidents. UNIFIL is in close contact with the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces to determine the nature of any security barrier to be erected. The tripartite forum also sought to encourage understandings to decrease tensions in other sensitive areas along the Blue Line. The Force Commander remained engaged with the Israel Defense Forces, with a view to securing agreement to renew the arrangements in place in 2010 allowing farmers from Blida to access parts of their olive fields located south of the Blue Line.

34. The process of visibly marking the Blue Line continued. As at 13 February, the total number of points agreed between the parties for marking has reached 253 out of 470 to be marked. UNIFIL deminers have cleared access to 192 points and 140 have been measured. Some 126 Blue Line markers have been constructed and 100 of those markers have been verified by both parties.

35. UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces made progress on the Strategic Dialogue. They continued to calibrate their joint assessment of the capability gap that exists between them and began devising a plan to bridge it, with a view to gradually enhancing the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, so that it can increasingly carry out operational activities under resolution 1701 (2006), which are at present undertaken by UNIFIL.

36. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations conducted on my behalf a strategic review of UNIFIL in accordance with Security Council resolution 2004 (2011). The terms of reference for the review were conveyed on 15 November 2011 to Council members and UNIFIL troop-contributing countries in an informal briefing by Department officials. A Department multidisciplinary team led by Julian Harston, a retired United Nations Assistant Secretary-General, visited UNIFIL, Beirut and Tel Aviv from 8 to 18 December 2011. The team assessed the implementation of the UNIFIL mandate, with a particular focus on the Mission's key functions, tasks and activities. In Beirut, the team met with senior representatives of the Lebanese Armed Forces and Lebanese political authorities, as well as Ambassadors, including those from troop-contributing countries to UNIFIL. In Tel Aviv, the team met with representatives of the Israel Defense Forces and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The team separately met with the Lebanese Armed Forces and Israel Defense Forces delegations to the tripartite meeting. The team also met with the Acting Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Head of Mission and Chief of Staff of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) during their visit.

37. The Office of Military Affairs of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations conducted from 27 November to 7 December 2011 a military capability study in UNIFIL in order to analyse the military component's capability against the mandated tasks of the Mission and the current situation, and inform the strategic review, accordingly. The terms of reference for the study were presented to troop-contributing countries prior to the deployment to the field. The study was coordinated closely with the strategic review team and UNIFIL.

38. On 24 January 2012, Mr. Harston informally briefed Security Council members and troop-contributing countries on the main preliminary findings of the strategic review. I intend to convey the formal conclusions of the review, which are currently being finalized, in a letter to the Security Council in the coming weeks.

C. Disarming armed groups

39. In its resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council called for the full implementation of the relevant provisions of the Taif Accords, and resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1680 (2006), which require the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon, so that there will be no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon.

40. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the Lebanese State, in violation of resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006), continues to pose a serious challenge to the State's ability to exercise full sovereignty and authority over its territory. During my visit to Lebanon in January, I reiterated my deep concern about this and renewed my strong call for the implementation of resolutions 1559 (2004) and 1701 (2006) in relation to such arms. Hizbullah has nonetheless continued to acknowledge that it maintains a substantial military capacity separate from that of the Lebanese State, claiming it serves defensive purposes against Israel. In public statements, the Secretary-General of Hizbullah has asserted that the armed capacity of his party would continue to increase in strength and capability and that its weaponry continues to be updated.

41. The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC) and Fatah al-Intifada continue to maintain a number of military bases outside the control of the Lebanese State. All but one of these bases are located along the Lebanese-Syrian border, compromising Lebanese sovereignty and governmental authority and impeding the State's ability to effectively monitor and control the eastern land border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic. In spite of the National Dialogue's decision in 2006, reaffirmed in its subsequent meetings and in the policy platform of the current Government of Lebanon, there has been no progress towards dismantling these bases during the reporting period. I have repeatedly called on the Lebanese authorities to dismantle the PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases and on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to cooperate with such efforts.

42. The situation in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon has remained precarious. Occasional security incidents and inter-factional clashes, especially in Ain al-Hilweh, continued to occur. Successive attempts on the life of a senior Fatah military commander there led to the death of two security officials associated with him during the reporting period.

43. The recurrence of security incidents throughout Lebanon over the reporting period illustrates the threat that arms outside the control of the State and the proliferation of weapons continue to pose to Lebanon's sovereignty, unity, political stability and public safety. In response to the continued occurrence of such incidents, a number of parliamentarians and political leaders in Lebanon have actively campaigned to ban weapons from cities, including Beirut and Tripoli.

44. I have long supported the National Dialogue in Lebanon as a Lebanese-led political process towards the disarmament of armed groups so that there will be no weapons without the consent of the Government of Lebanon and no authority other than that of the Government of Lebanon. This is the process that Lebanese leaders committed to in May 2008. Since November 2010, there have been no meetings of the National Dialogue. During my recent trip to Lebanon, I strongly encouraged my interlocutors to reconvene the National Dialogue and to make tangible progress on the development of a national defence strategy that would address the question of arms outside the control of the State. I welcome President Sleiman's reassurances of his continued commitment and determination to relaunch the National Dialogue process.

D. Arms embargo

45. In resolution 1701 (2006), the Security Council decided that all States were to prevent the sale and supply of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon by their nationals, or from territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft.

46. The Government of Israel has maintained its allegations of significant transfers of arms across the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic to Hizbullah during the reporting period. The United Nations takes these allegations seriously but does not have the means to independently verify this information and has not been provided with concrete evidence. The Government of Lebanon has not reported any breaches of the arms embargo imposed under resolution 1701 (2006).

47. The Security Council in its resolution 1701 (2006) also called upon the Government of Lebanon to secure its borders and other entry points so as to prevent the entry into Lebanon without its consent of arms and related materiel. In my discussions with interlocutors during my recent visit to Lebanon, I encouraged the Government of Lebanon again to adopt and implement a comprehensive strategy for the management of Lebanon's land borders. Donors have continued to share information and coordinate their support to Lebanon's security agencies for improved border management. However, the absence of an endorsed governmental strategy impairs the ability of donors to mobilize additional resources to support this endeavour.

48. The deployment of the Common Border Force along the northern border with the Syrian Arab Republic and that of the Second Border Regiment of the Army along the next 70 km of the border to the east, as described in previous reports, has remained unchanged. In response to the ongoing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and its impact on Lebanon, the Lebanese Higher Defence Council met on 29 December to discuss the situation along the border and in border communities and stressed the need to prevent illegal transfers of weapons to and from Lebanon. The Lebanese Council of Ministers has also been seized of the matter. The Lebanese Armed Forces have sought to tighten control along the border through the temporary deployment of a special unit to the northern border in the area of Wadi Khaled to enforce additional controls.

49. Against this background, Syrian authorities, including the Ambassador of the Syrian Arab Republic to Lebanon, have called on the Government of Lebanon to take strict measures to halt all trafficking of arms, asserting that the responsibility in this regard rests mostly with Lebanon. The Syrian military has also undertaken actions to enforce stricter control of the border, including by planting landmines along a stretch of the northern border where the majority of displaced Syrians seeking assistance have crossed into Lebanon.

50. Syrian civilians have continued to cross the border to flee the ongoing violence in their country. As at 27 January 2012, UNHCR and the Government of Lebanon had registered over 6,133 displaced Syrians, most of whom have found refuge with relatives in Lebanon. The United Nations continues to coordinate closely with the Government of Lebanon on the provision of protection and assistance to them. Over the past several months, a number of wounded individuals have been admitted to Lebanese health facilities as a result of the violence on the Syrian side of the border. Some have died from their injuries.

E. Landmines and cluster bombs

51. The Lebanese Mine Action Centre, a unit of the Lebanese Armed Forces, is the national authority for mine action in Lebanon with full responsibility for the management of all humanitarian clearance. The United Nations Mine Action Support Team continued to provide support to the Lebanese Mine Action Centre in resource mobilization to support future victim assistance and humanitarian mine clearance activities in 2012.

52. The United Nations Mine Action Support Team also continued to support UNIFIL demining activities along the Blue Line by providing training to contingents, as well as conducting validation and quality assurance monitoring.

According to reports from the Lebanese Mine Action Centre, 1,138 cluster bomb strike locations have been recorded since 14 August 2006. This number has decreased from the previously reported 1,147 strike locations owing to the removal of duplicated reports. A total of 408 victims have been reported to date, of whom 357 were injured and 51 killed. Among them, 43 were demining personnel, of whom 36 were injured and 7 killed.

F. Delineation of borders

53. The Security Council, in paragraph 4 of its resolution 1680 (2006), strongly encouraged the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to respond positively to the request of the Government of Lebanon to delineate their common border, especially in those areas where the border is uncertain or disputed. In its resolution 1701 (2006) the Council reiterated the call.

54. The complex security situation along the Syrian-Lebanese border in the current circumstances further underlines the importance of delineating and demarcating the border. Effective border management will continue to face difficulties unless and until the border is fully delineated and demarcated and the issue of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada bases straddling the border is resolved.

55. However, no tangible steps have been taken by either side during the period under review towards the delineation and demarcation of the border between Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

56. There has been no progress either on the issue of the Shab'a Farms area. Neither the Syrian Arab Republic nor Israel has reacted to the provisional definition of the area contained in my report on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2007/641), issued on 30 October 2007.

III. Security and safety of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

57. On 9 December, an explosion caused by a roadside bomb targeted a soft-skin UNIFIL vehicle on the outskirts of Tyre. This was the first attack against UNIFIL inside the UNIFIL area of operation since 2007, and overall the sixth attack against UNIFIL since the adoption of resolution 1701 (2006). The explosion caused light injuries to five peacekeepers serving with the French contingent and two Lebanese civilian passers-by. The attack was carried out several hundred metres from the heavily populated residential area of Tyre-Hosh. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which was strongly condemned by senior Lebanese officials, along with political leaders from across the political spectrum. The Lebanese authorities and UNIFIL immediately launched an investigation into the incident; no arrests have been made to date. The French authorities also have opened an investigation into the attack. On 22 December, following the attack, President Sleiman accompanied by Defence Minister Ghosn and Lebanese Armed Forces Commander General Kahwaji visited UNIFIL headquarters and the soldiers injured in the attack.

58. The latest attack demonstrated that the terrorist threat against UNIFIL is not limited to areas along the main supply route outside the area of operations, but extends also into the mission's area of operations, including areas in close proximity

to population centres. It is the obligation of all parties to ensure the safety and security of UNIFIL and the responsibility of the Government of Lebanon to maintain law and order, including through effective measures countering threats and by bringing the perpetrators of all attacks against UNIFIL to justice. The security and safety of UNIFIL personnel remains a high priority. UNIFIL continuously reviewed its security plans and risk mitigation measures, and carried out safety awareness training for its personnel and force protection works for installations and assets. UNIFIL and the Lebanese authorities continued to cooperate to ensure that all security threats are addressed appropriately. Complementing the measures taken by the Government of Lebanon, UNIFIL has continued to apply its own risk-mitigating measures.

59. UNIFIL continued to observe proceedings in the Lebanese military court against individuals accused of forming armed groups to carry out attacks against UNIFIL. On 3 January 2012, the highest military appeal court accepted the appeal by the individuals sentenced to prison on 10 October 2011 for possessing weapons and explosives and planning attacks against Lebanese military and security establishments as well as UNIFIL. A hearing is scheduled for 24 April 2012. In another case where three defendants are accused of having formed an armed gang aiming at implementing terrorist attacks, attacking the State military institutions and UNIFIL, a court session took place on 18 November 2011 but was adjourned until 2 March 2012.

IV. Deployment of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon

60. As at 14 February 2012, the total military strength of UNIFIL was 12,091, including 470 women. As of that date, the mission had 348 international and 657 national civilian staff members, of whom 100 and 168, respectively, were women. UNIFIL is also supported by 52 UNTSO military observers of the Observer Group Lebanon, five of whom are women.

61. Italy completed the withdrawal of one battalion from Sector West in November. The Austrian multirole logistics company replaced the Danish multirole logistics company late in November 2011. As from 1 February 2012, Spain terminated the contribution to UNIFIL of its two light military helicopters. The Force made some initial adjustments to its configuration in order to adapt to the slight change of deployed troops and assets on the ground. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is now finalizing the layout and Force requirements, in coordination with UNIFIL. A Brazilian flagship was deployed in mid-November 2011, bringing the total strength of the Maritime Task Force to nine vessels, including one frigate, four corvettes, three patrol boats, one supply vessel, in addition to two helicopters. Brazil has agreed to extend the deployment of its flagship until mid-November 2012.

V. Observations

62. I am encouraged that despite a number of incidents and recurring violations of the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006), general stability and calm have continued to characterize the situation along the Blue Line and within Lebanon. The cessation

of hostilities continues to provide a framework of predictability and stability for both parties. I deem it imperative that both parties continue to remain fully committed to it.

63. I welcome the commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) that the Governments of Lebanon and of Israel reiterated to me during my recent visits to the region. At the same time, I am concerned that, in continuation of a previous trend, the parties have not made further progress on the implementation of their respective obligations under the resolution. The lack of forward movement towards the objective of a permanent ceasefire and lasting solution between the parties increases the potential of an erosion of the arrangements put in place under resolution 1701 (2006). I therefore call on both Lebanon and Israel to redouble their efforts to fulfil their obligations and fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

64. I also note the fragility of the situation in the current regional climate of change and uncertainty. I am deeply concerned over the continuing crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic and its potential repercussions for Lebanon and resolution 1701 (2006). In this context, it is paramount that the cessation of hostilities between Lebanon and Israel and the arrangements put in place under resolution 1701 (2006) be fully preserved. I commend the Government of Lebanon for its efforts to date to ensure that Lebanon is not negatively impacted by the effects of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic.

65. I condemn in the strongest terms the attack against UNIFIL personnel on 9 December. I call on the Lebanese authorities to do their utmost to bring the perpetrators of this attack to justice. I recall the obligation of all parties to safeguard the safety and security of United Nations personnel. In this regard, I note that the effective execution of UNIFIL tasks depends on the safety and security of its personnel and their unlimited freedom of movement. Effective measures must be taken to curb and prevent all incidents that endanger the safety and security of peacekeepers or impede their freedom of movement. I stress that the primary responsibility for this lies with the Lebanese authorities.

66. I condemn the firing of rockets on 29 November and 11 December 2011, the first such attacks since October 2009. The firing of rockets, as well as preparations to do so, constitute hostile activities and are serious breaches of resolution 1701 (2006) and the cessation of hostilities. These and other incidents reported above demonstrated a presence of unauthorized armed personnel, arms and materiel inside the UNIFIL area of operations. The Lebanese authorities have the primary responsibility to ensure that there are no unauthorized armed personnel, assets or weapons in the area between the Blue Line and the Litani River and to prevent hostile activities from Lebanese territory. I reiterate my earlier calls on the Lebanese authorities to make further progress in this regard. UNIFIL assists the Lebanese authorities in this endeavour. I am also concerned about the retaliatory fire into southern Lebanon by the Israel Defense Forces. In the context of the cessation of hostilities, it is the expectation of the United Nations that, if they have been fired upon, the parties immediately notify UNIFIL and refrain from responding except where clearly required in immediate self-defence, and allow UNIFIL in the first instance to deal with the attack.

67. I express my appreciation to both parties for ensuring that these incidents did not escalate. This demonstrates their continuing commitment to resolution 1701 (2006) and to the importance of the liaison and coordination arrangements of

UNIFIL, including the tripartite mechanism. Nevertheless, Lebanon needs to do its utmost to prevent future incidents of this kind from its territory. The parties need to act with maximum restraint in order to prevent armed elements from undermining the prevailing stability and provoking a larger confrontation and escalation.

68. I am also concerned about the explosions that have occurred at commercial establishments in the city of Tyre. I urge the Lebanese authorities to make every effort to apprehend the perpetrators of all attacks and bring them to justice.

69. It remains imperative that the parties take full advantage of the strategic environment that UNIFIL, in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has helped to establish. The parties must maintain their commitment to the cessation of hostilities; fully respect the Blue Line in its entirety; continue working with UNIFIL on pragmatic and constructive confidence-building measures along the Blue Line, including visibly marking the Blue Line; and work to strengthen the liaison and coordination arrangements.

70. There are also other actions that each party must separately undertake. For Israel, they include the withdrawal of Israel Defense Forces soldiers from the northern part of Ghajar and the adjacent areas north of the Blue Line and the full cessation of violations of Lebanese airspace, which exacerbate tensions in the UNIFIL area of operations and have the potential to trigger a serious incident.

71. It is important that Lebanon make further progress towards exercising effective authority over all Lebanese territory, preventing the use of its territory for hostile activities, and ensuring the implementation of Government decisions and stipulations of resolution 1701 (2006) with respect to an area free of armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government and of UNIFIL.

72. The Strategic Dialogue process between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces aims to identify Lebanese Armed Forces requirements for implementing tasks mandated in resolution 1701 (2006) and facilitate the gradual transfer of responsibilities from UNIFIL to the Lebanese Armed Forces. The support of the international community remains integral to the success of this process. I am grateful to those countries that continue to provide critical assistance to the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the navy. I urge the international community to further demonstrate its commitment to building the capacity of the Lebanese Armed Forces, including the navy, in particular through the provision of necessary equipment and training.

73. The recurrence of security incidents throughout Lebanon remains of concern to me and highlights the threat posed by the proliferation of arms in the country. I welcome initiatives aimed at removing arms from public life in Lebanon.

74. The maintenance of arms by Hizbullah and other groups outside the control of the State impedes the assertion of the State's monopoly on the legitimate use of force. It poses a continuing threat to Lebanese sovereignty and stability and impedes the fulfilment of Lebanon's obligations under resolutions 1701 (2006) and 1559 (2004).

75. I continue to believe that only a domestic political process in Lebanon can yield the disarmament of armed groups in such a way that the unity, political stability, institutional capacity and authority of the Lebanese State is enhanced. I am therefore disappointed that the National Dialogue has not even met for more than

one year. I am encouraged by President Sleiman's continued dedication to relaunching the National Dialogue. I call on all political parties in Lebanon to reconvene and make tangible progress on the development of a national defence strategy that addresses the question of arms outside the control of the State. I also reiterate my strong call on the Government of Lebanon to implement previous decisions of the National Dialogue, particularly those related to the disarmament of non-Lebanese groups and the dismantling of PFLP-GC and Fatah al-Intifada military bases, which is long overdue.

76. I welcome the visit of the Minister of Social Affairs of Lebanon to the Palestinian refugee camp of Burj al-Barajneh on 24 January 2012, the first visit by a Cabinet member in six years, and his signing of a memorandum of understanding with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East that facilitates the provision of services to some of the most vulnerable constituencies in the camps. In this vein, I urge the Government of Lebanon to reinvigorate the effort to improve the living conditions of Palestine refugees in Lebanon, without prejudice to the resolution of the refugee question in the context of a comprehensive regional peace agreement. As I said during my recent visit to Lebanon, as a founding member of the United Nations and a key contributor to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Lebanon must be at the forefront of ensuring full respect for human rights and dignity.

77. This principle also applies to Lebanon's provision of shelter and assistance to displaced Syrians who have fled the continuing violence in their home country. While most of the displaced Syrians have found refuge with relatives in Lebanon, such arrangements might reach the limit of sustainability if their number grows further. I warmly welcome the work of Lebanon's High Relief Commission and trust that Lebanon will continue to provide necessary humanitarian assistance and support to the displaced.

78. I call upon all Member States to prevent transfers of arms and related materiel to entities or individuals in Lebanon without the consent of the Lebanese State. I stress again the importance of the early adoption of a comprehensive border management strategy by the Government of Lebanon. The United Nations and donors stand ready to support the Government of Lebanon in its endeavour to protect the country and its land borders in a volatile and complex regional environment.

79. I am deeply concerned by the actions of the authorities of the Syrian Arab Republic along the Lebanese-Syrian border that have led to loss of life or injury in Lebanon. I call upon the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to refrain from any such action and respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006).

80. I regret that progress has remained impossible on the border delineation with the Syrian Arab Republic and that the diplomatic process aimed at finding a solution to the issue of the Shab'a Farms area in accordance with paragraph 10 of resolution 1701 (2006) has remained stalled. I call, once again, on the Syrian Arab Republic and Israel to submit their responses to the provisional definition of the Shab'a Farms area that I provided in October 2007 (S/2007/641). I will continue my efforts to move this process forward.

81. I have continued to monitor developments pertaining to the delimitation of maritime zones and the exploration and exploitation of resources in the eastern Mediterranean and discussed related issues with relevant interlocutors during my recent visit to the re ion. I welcome steps taken to facilitate the exploration and exploitation of resources in areas that are not in dispute. I encourage Israel and Lebanon to continue to engage in exploration and exploitation efforts in a manner that does not give rise to further tension. The United Nations stands ready to assist the parties with regard to this issue should they request it.

82. I wish to express my appreciation to Major General Alberto Asarta Cuevas, who completed his two-year tenure as Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL on 28 January 2012, for his efforts to maintain stability in southern Lebanon and further the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). I commend the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL, who continue to play a critical role in helping to promote peace and stability in southern Lebanon, as well as the staff of the Office of the Special Coordinator for Lebanon.

83. The regional environment in which the effort to implement resolution 1701 unfolds is of critical importance to its success. This does not only apply to developments in the Syrian Arab Republic and their reverberations in Lebanon and, potentially, along the Blue Line. I call on both Israel and Lebanon to take the necessary steps to achieve what resolution 1701 (2006) terms a long-term solution governing their relations. It continues to be my profound conviction that achieving that solution and ensuring the full territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence of Lebanon cannot and should not be dissociated from the need to exert all possible efforts to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East.